

— but I wish to *act* what I *write*. My works are the embodiment of my feelings. In *Vivian Grey* I have portrayed my active and real ambition.' Here again we might seem to have a final settlement of the matter ; but even this declaration must not be pressed too far. Disraeli, with his infinitely subtle and elusive mind and character, is a perpetual snare to the unwary who place too literal a construction upon his isolated words and actions. If it is ridiculous on the one hand to pretend that *Vivian Grey* is a confession written in a fit of penitence and remorse, it would be no less ridiculous on the other to pretend that Disraeli was unconscious of or indifferent to the moral obliquity of his hero, or that he deliberately set him up as an example which he afterwards meant to follow.

Though neither of the rival theories is wholly satisfactory, neither is wholly false, and it is not impossible to effect a harmony between them. Disraeli, as has been seen, used in later life to declare that he wrote *Vivian Grey* at Plumer Ward's house, where his family spent the autumn of 1825. It is not easy to see how in the whirl of those crowded months he could have found the leisure necessary for the completion of such a task; and Mrs. Austen's letters seem to imply that a good deal of work was done on *Vivian Grey* after the secret had been confided to her in the following spring. But it is highly probable that a beginning had been made before, either at Hyde House in the month preceding Disraeli's first visit to Abbotsford, or even at an earlier date; and that the story was picked up again after the catastrophe of *The Representative*. No one reading *Vivian Grey*, especially if he read it in the original edition, can fail to be struck by the contrast between the first volume and the second. All the merit of the book lies in the first volume.¹ In the earlier chapters especially we find the author writing from a genuine artistic impulse and with a joyous interest in his subject ; and

¹ Containing the first two books of the ordinary editions.